

THE ESSENTIAL EIGHT

Step One: Decide to Act With Purpose

- Are you deciding to make a difference, or are you just going along with someone else's decision?
- Do you anticipate some unexpected setbacks?
- Do you know you need to build the interest and commitment of other people and that you will need to make room for their contributions, including their leadership?
- Do you anticipate that you will be able to recognize progress, even when the going is slow?
- Are you willing to take some satisfaction from the good things that happen, including your decision to act in the first place?
- Are you willing to learn what you need to know?

Step Two: Understand and Clarify the Issue

- What is the source of discomfort about this issue? (Remember, "discomfort" can include something exciting that people want to create or do. The tension existing between the current condition and the new exciting one is a kind of discomfort.)
- What is the nature and extent of discomfort?
- What is it that you want to be different?
- What basic assumptions about decency or fairness or some other widely held values does this include?

These questions will help you look at the effect or implications of this condition or issue.

- What are the legal implications, especially related to the denial of rights?
- What are the financial consequences; especially what scarcities, losses, or added expenses may result?
- What are the effects on society, the community, or a particular group?

Consider some alternative approaches to the current management of the issue.

- How has this matter been handled elsewhere?
- What solutions or better responses can be developed?
- What does "better" look like?

Never let these questions be far from your considerations.

- Do you know what you are talking about?

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- What are the consequences of your answer?

Step Three: Know the Actors in the Play

- Whom does this issue touch most directly?
- Whom does it touch indirectly?
- Who feels the problem?
- Who benefits from the problem?
- Whose behavior needs to change?
 - Among those who don't feel the problem?
 - Among those who feel the problem?
- Who makes decisions on matters affecting this issue? What contacts do you have with any of these people?
- Who maintains the problem?
 - Those who officially support it through some formal authority (for example, through maintenance or harmful policies)?
 - Those who unofficially support it by quelling opposition through intimidation or by subservient compliance?
- Who needs to feel the problem? How can they come to feel the problem?
- Who could provide opposition?
- Who could provide support?
 - Those who currently support you?
 - Those who don't yet support you but very likely would if asked?
 - Those who like you personally?
 - Those who would directly benefit from the changes sought?
 - Those who because of philosophy or previous activism would like to be involved?
- Who has dealt with this type of issue before?
 - Those in your own group?
 - Those outside your immediate group (for example, experts)?
- Whom do you need to make sure that you don't leave out?
- Who will be please by your actions? Why?
- Who will be upset by your actions? Why?
- How will you deal with these reactions to strengthen your efforts?

Step Four: Begin to Involve Other People

- Whom do you know that you could talk to about this?

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- What do you need to tell them to get them interested?
- How will you respond to their questions?
- What will you do if someone you counted on isn't willing to do anything?
- Who else should we be talking to?

Step Five: Figure Out What to Do

- What outcomes do you want to produce? What does "better" look like?
- Which actions or particular thing are you going to focus on? What does your group want to *start* with?
- What does your group need to take care of? What are the main pieces of the activity? What have you put in place to be sure these things are dealt with?
- What specific steps are you going to take?
- When will you take them?
- Who will do them? How will you spread the work around?
- How will you know that these things get done?

Step Six: Take Action

- Has the groundwork for the action been properly laid, and has your group completed preparations?
- Do you have someone to direct and manage the action that is prepared to do so in an encouraging way?
- Are participants enjoying what they are doing?
- Are people recognizing the fact that they are taking real action and contributing to making things better?
- Are you using this action to build enthusiasm and commitment?
- Are you attracting the attention you want?
- Are you accomplishing the other purposes that you expected?

Step Seven: Use the Action

- What are you learning?
- What should you do differently the next time? What should you do the same?

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- Who seems to have leadership abilities?
- What other things do you need, and how can you get them?
- How are you using this action to bring in new members and to give them something to do?
- Who noticed what you did?
- How can you capitalize on the responses you are getting?
 - From the public?
 - From the target?
 - From the members?
- How can you keep things going?

Step Eight: Repeat the Steps You Have Taken

- Are you willing to do something about this?
- What more do you need to know about the issue?
- What are you learning about the actors in the play?
- How are you developing leadership?
- How do you keep necessary people informed? Who are those necessary people?
- How do you keep people connected to each other?
- How are you going to make decisions?
- What are your next steps?
- Who will take them?
- Are you still taking action?
- What are you learning?